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181544Z Sep 03

UNCLAS ANKARA 005920

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AF EAID PREL TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY SUPPORTS U.S. EFFORT TO ACCELERATE
ASSISTANCE FOR AFGHANISTAN

REF: SECSTATE 258067

¶11. (SBU) Turkey shares the U.S. goal to accelerate assistance to Afghanistan. Turkey has already exceeded its original 5-year pledge of \$5 million and hopes to commit another USD 3 million in 2004. Ambassador Okcun, Turkey's Afghan Reconstruction Coordinator, will attend the September 21 meeting in Dubai.

¶12. (U) Econoff spoke with MFA Coordinator for Afghan Reconstruction Ambassador Ahmet Okcun, who said that Turkey completely supports the U.S. effort to encourage donors to accelerate assistance for Afghanistan. Okcun said that Turkey has repeatedly advocated increasing the tempo of assistance and has taken steps to increase its assistance to Afghanistan. Turkey's original pledge was for USD 1 million per year for 5 years. However, the government has significantly stepped up its contribution, disbursing USD 3 million in 2002 and over USD 2 million by the end of this year. Okcun added that he expects the GOT will approve an additional USD 3 million for Afghanistan in 2004.

¶13. (SBU) Okcun expressed his concern that a combination of donor fatigue and the need to finance reconstruction in Iraq could reduce international support for Afghanistan. Such a result would harm Afghanistan's chances for stability and democracy and severely undermine the credibility of the U.S. and its allies, he said.

¶14. (SBU) Okcun chairs a weekly interagency meeting on Afghan and Iraq Reconstruction, which includes representatives from the private sector, to ensure follow through on Turkey's commitments and respond quickly to needs that arise. He noted that Turkey is already feeling the economic benefits of Afghanistan's renewal. Turkish officials claim that Turkey is the number one investor in Afghanistan and bilateral trade, though still small, is expected to reach a new high this year. He also said Turkish contractors are playing a leading role in reconstruction activities, many of them financed by the U.S.

EDELMAN